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With Bow to Safety, Deer Hunting Season Underway

By KEITH L. MARTIN

Deer hunting season is underway in Duxbury, but with some changes from last year.

Responding to the concerns by both bow hunters and the public, the Conservation Commission is implementing new hunting regulations geared to satisfy both sides while also preserving safety for active and non-hunters.

In August, the committee voted to extend bowhunting



Dave Bitters' family has been hunting in Duxbury for four generations.

regulations for deer for two years on specific lots of town land while also allowing the use of bows and arrows during shotgun and muzzleloader seasons, extending the time bowhunters can use that equipment.

"We were trying to take a logical, middle of the road approach versus what other towns were doing," said Joe Grady, Duxbury's conservation administrator.

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Deer

Deer Hunting Season Underway

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"Bowhunting is the type of hunting that is non-intrusive and doesn't mix with activities in other uses of the land."

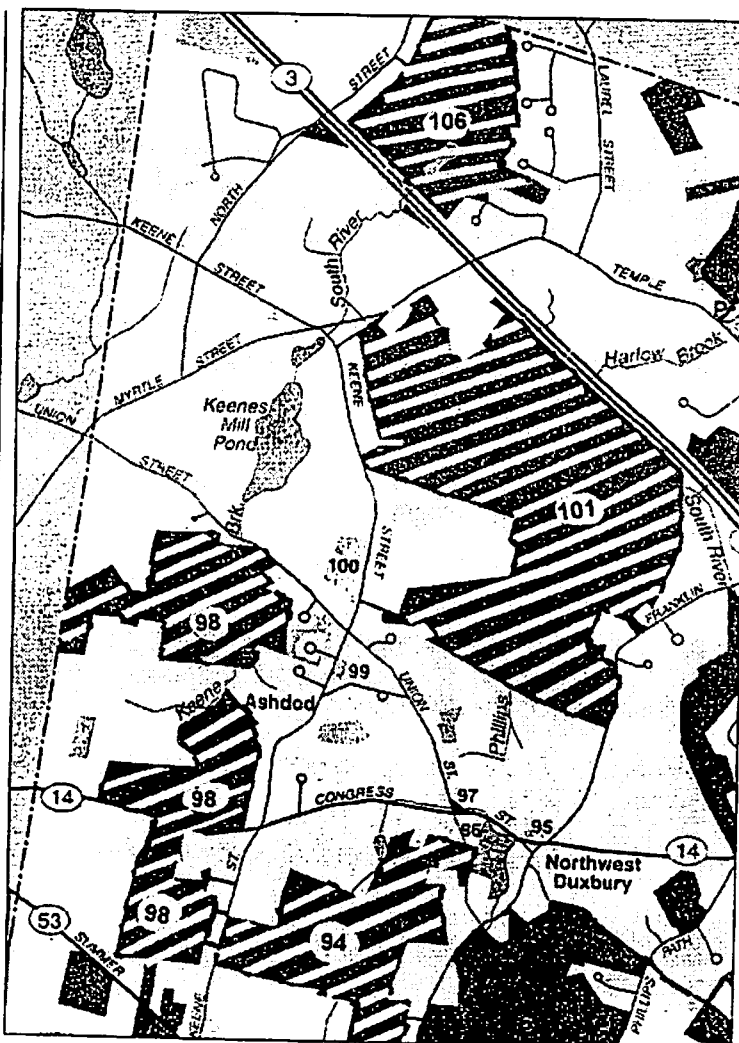
Bowhunters will now have access to 915 acres of conservation property from October 13 to November 22 as well as a few weeks in December to hunt deer. The property includes larger tracts of land not largely used by people such as the South River Bogs and Ashdod Forest.

The decision from the committee comes after hearing from both hunters and non-hunters in town last August as well as from a suggestion from MassWildlife. The agency recommended these two steps to Duxbury using the town of Wilbraham as an example.

There, the same requirements resulted in more deer kills as well as fewer deer-car collisions, something Duxbury is looking to also decrease, said Grady.

"We are very concerned with roadkills and people getting hurt as well as lyme disease, which has gone up in town," said Grady, who's family has found three deer ticks in the last two weeks alone.

In fact, information from the town Board of Health shows that in 2001, there were no cases of lyme disease, yet in 2002 there were 10 and so far this year there are six.



The striped areas above indicate conservation areas where bow hunting is allowed this season.

benefit and if deer [management is] a part of that, I would support the commission in controlling lyme disease," she said.

One hunter who feels the new regulations are a good step to managing the deer population is Dave Bitters, owner of Baymen Outfitters.



Conservation Administrator Joe Grady said new hunting regulations in town are a result of feedback from both hunters and the public.

"I'm not sure if [these numbers] mean there is more of a threat or instead if more people are being tested for the disease, said Health Agent Jennifer Dalrymple. "There is a push now towards education on the disease and more people are asking for the tests."

Dalrymple added that another explanation for the rise in numbers is that with that education, people who may have had the disease for a couple years may have just been diagnosed.

As for the increased deer management stance, Dalrymple said she stands by whatever the Conservation Commission sees fit.

"Anything we can do to minimize lyme disease is a

For four generations, Bitters' family has hunted in Duxbury making it a rich family tradition and one that dates back before the Pilgrims.

Bitters also recognizes that the deer population in town is growing and management steps need to be in place for safety reasons.

"We're approaching a crisis situation, so we need a good management solution," said Bitters. "For example, we will have a problem in the Standish Shores area in five years or less seeing as there are about 15 to 25 deer in that area mowing down shrubs and trees."

Bitters' philosophy is that with man out of the way, deer would manage themselves through disease, starvation and other factors, but since

you can't take man out of the ecosystem, a good wildlife management and conservation strategy is the answer.

One may think as a hunter, Bitters would naturally love to see wider hunting regulations but as a conservationist and someone who studies species of deer, he knows that the hunt is a minor part of the total experience.

"I love to see cows in a pasture and I also obviously love filet mignon," he said. "To me, deer hunting is the epitome of the whole experience. The killing aspect is so minimal. It's like managing cattle -the killing of steer is part of the experience."